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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

24 September 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Reconnaissance in a Front Offensive Operation to the Depth of a Theater

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article discusses the complexity of setting up reconnaissance in an offensive operation of a front conducted to the entire depth of a theater of military operations, in view of limitations on time and means available. To best fulfil the reconnaissance tasks in these operations reconnaissance should be organized in a centralized manner, employing new technical means enabling the front to obtain and process the information received in the shortest possible time. This article appeared in Issue No. 1 (80) for 1967. The Russian-language version was disseminated as FIRDB-312/02202-75.

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2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned the Codeword [redacted]

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William W. Wells

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# Intelligence Information Special Report



COUNTRY USSR

FIRDB - 312/02558-76

DATE OF INFO. Early 1967

DATE 24 September 1976

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Features of the Organization of Reconnaissance in a Front Offensive Operation to the Depth of a Theater of Military Operations

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (80) for 1967 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel I. Khozin. This article discusses the complexity of setting up reconnaissance in an offensive operation of a front conducted to the entire depth of a theater of military operations, in view of the immense territory and large number of targets to be covered in a limited amount of time with inadequate means. To best fulfil the reconnaissance tasks in these operations, the author feels reconnaissance should be organized in the theater in a centralized manner by the General Staff, employing new technical means enabling the front to obtain and process the information received in the shortest possible time.

End of Summary

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# Features of the Organization of Reconnaissance in an Offensive Operation of a Front Conducted to the Entire Depth of a Theater of Military Operations

by

Colonel I. Khozin

The physical-geographic conditions and strategic importance of the continental theaters of military operations vary, and so the probable enemy assigns a specific role to each of them in a nuclear war. Their preparation is diverse in both an operational and strategic sense, and within the theaters groupings of armed forces have been formed which differ in composition and capabilities. Therefore, front offensive operations conducted with decisive goals at high speeds to the entire depth of a theater of military operations will also differ substantially from one another, and, consequently, the organization and conduct of reconnaissance in each of them will have their own distinctive features.

In order to have a common approach to the determination of the most general features and conditions for the organization and conduct of reconnaissance, we will note that by the front offensive operation which we are examining, we mean an operation being conducted to the entire depth of the main continental theaters of military operations. It is not difficult to imagine all the complexities of the tasks which confront reconnaissance in such an operation. It must provide the command in a timely manner with necessary data which it must obtain from an enormous territory. This is what constitutes the first feature of the organization of reconnaissance.

In the main theater of military operations the probable enemy has a powerful grouping of armed forces. At the beginning of a war a very large number of enemy targets which must be detected in a timely manner and kept under constant surveillance, might turn up opposite the front which is advancing to the entire depth of the theater. Consequently, the number of specific tasks for front reconnaisance also sharply increases. Thus, during an offensive to the depth of the Western Theater of Military Operations surveillance must be organized against 750 to 1,000 targets. This is what the second feature of the organization of



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reconnaissance consists of.

Undoubtedly, the operations being examined will be conducted only on the most important axes. Therefore, we can assume that a front advancing to the entire depth of a theater of military operations and carrying out the most important tasks in comparison with adjacent fronts, will have a stronger combat composition, more means of destruction, and in its zone the General Headquarters of the Supreme High Command obviously will employ the maximum number of forces and means, and above all medium-range ballistic missiles and long range aviation, as well as airborne landing forces. As a result the offensive will develop extremely swiftly.

The third feature of the organization of reconnaissance proceeds from this, and consists in the fact that the reconnaissance tasks which are greater in scope must be fulfilled within very short time limits. Consequently, the significance of the timeliness of reconnaissance in such an operation grows substantially.

To organize and conduct reconnaissance will require that there be appropriate forces and means which ensure that the necessary data are obtained on enemy targets echeloned throughout the theater of military operations.

At the present time a front is capable of conducting reconnaissance with technical means only to a distance of 800 to 1,000 kilometers, and only by means of radio intercept in the shortwave band to a distance of 2,000 kilometers or more. The number of reconnaissance forces and means of a front makes up an average of 50 to 60 percent of its needs. Consequently, when organizing reconnaissance one must take into consideration that it will largely be up to the General Staff to provide the front with reconnaissance information to prepare and conduct an offensive operation to the entire depth of a theater of military operations, but it will be up to the front to provide the armies with this information.

It has been asked, must reconnaissance then be set up throughout the depth of a theater of military operations? Can it not be conducted to a lesser depth -- roughly to the operating range of the front means of destruction?



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In our opinion, if a front offensive operation is planned beforehand to the entire depth of the theater of military operations, then reconnaissance, too, in order to support this operation, must be organized not to a lesser depth, but even to a greater depth and, unquestionably, beforehand as well.

Achievement of the objective of the operation requires simultaneous action against enemy targets situated throughout the depth of the theater of military operations and capable, even at the beginning of combat actions, of delivering nuclear strikes, and then powerful counterattacks, against the troops of the advancing front. Therefore, reconnaissance must also be conducted to the same depth so that continuous surveillance can be carried out against nuclear means, groupings of troops, aviation, naval forces, and against other most important enemy targets, and so that we constantly know their composition, status, nature of actions and intentions.

The need for constant knowledge of the enemy, even if he is not the object of destruction by the front means at a given moment, is brought about by the fact that modern capabilities for transporting troops, armament and military equipment by air, by sea, and overland make the sudden appearance of enemy missile/nuclear means, large troop groupings, and aviation in the front zone a real possibility.

Finally, if simultaneous surveillance is not organized against all or even just the most important enemy targets situated in the zone of the forthcoming offensive to the entire depth of the theater of military operations, then the commander and staff of the front will be deprived of the capability to foresee changes in the situation in a timely manner and take the necessary measures to frustrate enemy intentions, and the advancing troops might be subjected to sudden strikes by the missile/nuclear means and counterattacks by groupings of ground forces, as a result of which they will suffer losses, and perhaps even generally lose their combat effectiveness to some extent.

How, then, does one achieve the most effective reconnaissance for preparing and conducting a given operation if we keep in mind the features cited above, the limited number of forces and means which might be utilized to carry out the reconnaissance tasks, and their inadequate operating range?



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In view of the fact that the range of existing reconnaissance forces and means of a front (even considering the prospects for their development in the near future) does not permit simultaneous reconnaissance of enemy targets throughout the depth of a theater of military operations, and the number of forces and means available is only 50 to 60 percent of the requirement for them, we can conclude that the organization of reconnaissance for a front offensive operation to the entire depth of a theater of military operations must be maximally centralized. It must be conducted by the forces and means not only of the given front, but also of strategic reconnaissance, naval reconnaissance, adjacent fronts, the air defense forces of the country, and the border guard troops, as well as by the reconnaissance forces and means of the armies of the corresponding member-countries of the Warsaw Pact.

Naturally, the organization of such reconnaissance is feasible only for the General Staff. Just as a front offensive operation conducted to the entire depth of a theater of military operations is an integral part of a strategic operation in this theater of military operations, so, too, the reconnaissance of the given front should be an integral part of the reconnaissance being organized by the General Staff in the theater. When it is centralized more efficient use can be made of the forces and means at the disposal of the General Staff and the operational formations of various branches of the armed forces and, above all, the fronts, and possible parallelisms can be prevented, as well.

It is desirable to utilize the reconnaissance means of the General Staff to obtain information about the most deeply situated enemy targets for purposes of the employment of strategic weapons, as well as for the fronts beyond the limits of the capabilities of the front reconnaissance forces and means.

In accordance with the decision made as to setting up reconnaissance in the interests of supporting a strategic operation in a theater of military operations, it is desirable for the General Staff to indicate to the front which has received the task to attack throughout the depth of the theater of military operations, at what time, within what limits, and which types of reconnaissance to conduct; which reconnaissance tasks to carry out for the Supreme High Command with the forces and means



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of the front and by what time; and reconnaissance of which targets and areas (axes) will be carried out for the given front with the forces and means of the General Staff.

What, then, in this case could the role of the commander and the staff of the front be in setting up reconnaissance which supports the preparation and conduct of a given front offensive operation? The front commander, in personally making the decision for an offensive operation, can most fully define the objective and main tasks of reconnaissance. He will indicate on which axes to concentrate the main reconnaissance efforts and which are the most important targets to reconnoiter first. Front reconnaissance efforts will be concentrated on fulfilling the most important reconnaissance tasks which are characteristic of each period of an offensive operation. However, we emphasize that reconnaissance under such conditions must be set up and conducted simultaneously with the beginning of preparation for the operation and until its final objective is achieved, in the entire zone of the front offensive and to the entire depth of the theater of military operations.

Herein lies the most important feature of the organization of reconnaissance for the operation being examined. It seems to us that this might be fully allowed for if reconnaissance were set up not "by tasks", but "in accordance with tasks" of the front in a given operation. In other words, it is necessary to plan and conduct reconnaissance simultaneously (not consecutively) in the interests of supporting the fulfilment of the immediate and subsequent tasks of the front, the commitment of the second echelon and reserves to battle, the dropping (landing) of landing forces, the assault crossing of large water obstacles, the repelling of attacks of the air enemy, the disruption of counterattacks by powerful ground forces groupings being transferred by the enemy to the zone of the front from other axes, theaters or continents, and the carrying out of other tasks. It is necessary to take this feature into consideration, and to organize and conduct reconnaissance in the interests of supporting the fulfilment of the subsequent task of the front prior to the beginning of military operations, but even more so when the immediate task is being fulfilled.

However, we consider that the front commander and his staff will need at any given moment not just any reconnaissance



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information, but above all that which is necessary for the preparation and effective employment of the forces and means intended for the fulfilment of the specific task. Therefore, the main efforts of the front reconnaissance must be concentrated on obtaining precisely these data.

A distinctive feature in the work of the staff of the front in the interests of more purposeful organization of reconnaissance will be that it will be necessary to devote more attention to the allocation of reconnaissance efforts by axes, areas, and targets, as well as to mutual coordination with the staffs of adjacent and cooperating formations in obtaining the necessary reconnaissance information.

Owing to the inadequacy of its own forces and means, the staff of the front is obligated in peacetime to determine which tasks it will carry out independently and within what time limits, which ones it will carry out in cooperation with other staffs, and which reconnaissance data it will have to request from the General Staff. It should also carefully think through the procedure for collecting, processing, and reporting the reconnaissance information obtained by various reconnaissance sources and organs, since all this is extremely complex.

In view of the fact that there will be a great many enemy targets, and the time for the fulfilment of tasks will be limited, reconnaissance reporting must be organized very concisely and implemented within minimum time limits, reckoned in minutes, not hours. Obviously, such results can be achieved only if the front has a single center for all types of reconnaissance, equipped with high-speed electronic computers. Therefore, the front chief of intelligence must have a special system which provides for collecting and processing information obtained by various sources, organs, and means. Naturally, such a system must possess a high degree of operating reliability and sufficient capacity, and have remote units to display the situation for the troop commander, the chief of staff, the chief of the rocket troops and artillery, the commander of the air army, and other chiefs of branch arms and services of the front field headquarters. The chiefs of intelligence of armies and divisions must also have corresponding systems.



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As is known, prior to the beginning of military operations limited forces and means are allocated to fulfil reconnaissance tasks. Taking this into consideration, the staff of a border military district (group of forces) must utilize all possible sources in peacetime with the object of getting the necessary reconnaissance information from them. Thus, for example, the data describing the probable enemy and the terrain in the deep rear in a theater of military operations and beyond its limits, can be received from the General Staff. It is desirable to get it also from the corresponding General Staffs of the armies of the Warsaw Pact member countries; about the enemy and terrain in the border zone -- from the border guard troops and from surveillance from ground-based and airborne observation posts set up by the staffs of armies, divisions, branch arms, special troops and others.

Thus, the activity of obtaining the reconnaissance data necessary to support an offensive operation of a front to the entire depth of a theater of military operations, must be exceptionally intense.

The front reconnaissance means will be utilized, above all, to obtain necessary data on enemy targets which are to be destroyed in the initial nuclear strike of the front. As the experience of exercises and war games shows, such targets are the nuclear attack means (guided missiles and operational-tactical cruise missiles, manned aircraft carrying nuclear warheads), and also nuclear weapons depots, surface-to-air guided missiles at launch sites, and divisions of first-echelon troops.

The methods of conducting reconnaissance will be conventional; however, when utilizing certain types of forces and means it is necessary to take the following main features into consideration.

Agent reconnaissance must maintain surveillance over all the most important targets situated in the zone of the forthcoming offensive, and at a distance of 30 to 50 kilometers or more from the state border (front line). It must be capable of "tracking" enemy targets if the front chief of intelligence gives the command. Because, in the course of an operation through the entire depth of the theater of military operations, the possibility of relocating previously legal agents will become



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extremely difficult, and perhaps completely ruled out, the staff of the front must have a large reserve of trained agents.

In the course of an operation, part of an operating agent net and special-purpose reconnaissance groups from adjacent fronts, the navy, and perhaps the General Staff as well, might be transferred or subordinated to the front; therefore, the intelligence directorate of the front staff must be capable of taking over the control of the forces and means transferred to it.

To ensure the necessary depth of direction finding and the establishment of more favorable conditions for direction finding of enemy radios located on the flanks of the offensive zone and on the seacoast, when setting up second-line radio reconnaissance it is desirable to provide for positioning second-line radio direction-finding posts in the zones of adjacent fronts, as well as for mutual direction finding of operating enemy radios using the means of its own and adjacent fronts, and, on coastal axes, using the means of the navy as well.

In order to ensure air reconnaissance is conducted to the maximum depth, it is advantageous to divide the overall zone of the front into three zones: operational-tactical, operational, and strategic. Within the limits of the first two zones, appropriate areas, zones and targets should be determined, and units, subunits, and teams responsible for the conduct of reconnaissance should be designated. In the strategic zone, 800 to 1,000 kilometers or more from the home airfields of front reconnaissance aviation, air reconnaissance must be carried out by the forces and means of the General Staff in accordance with its plan and at the request of the front staff.

Thus, the most complete reconnaissance information for the purposes of the offensive operation of a front being conducted to the entire depth of a theater of military operations, considering the forces and technical means of reconnaissance currently existing in the border military districts and also prospects for their development in the near future, can be obtained in the following manner.

First, by conducting front reconnaissance in a system set up by the General Staff in the theater of military operations in



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peacetime, to the entire depth of the operation, continuously, purposefully, and actively with the task of obtaining the necessary reconnaissance data in a timely manner with its own means, as well as receiving data from strategic reconnaissance, adjacent fronts, the navy, long range aviation, the air defense forces of the country and others.

Second, by organizing reconnaissance in accordance with the tasks of the front troops in an operation, and by conducting it simultaneously in the interests of supporting the immediate and subsequent tasks of the front.

Third, by concentrating front reconnaissance efforts in each given moment on carrying out the most important tasks, mainly in the interests of supporting the employment of missile/nuclear weapons, and on the reconnaissance and final reconnaissance of enemy targets situated within the operating range of the front means of destruction.

In spite of the fact that present capabilities of a front for conducting reconnaissance are half of its needs, it is not desirable to increase considerably the number of units and subunits armed with the reconnaissance equipment available at the present time, since the problem of conducting operational (front) reconnaissance to the entire depth of a theater of military operations will still not be resolved by simply increasing them.

At the same time, one should recognize the necessity of increasing the reconnaissance capabilities of combined-arms and tank armies now, however minimally, by including in their composition subunits of unmanned and light manned aircraft, and reconnaissance helicopters.

In order to increase the capabilities of operational reconnaissance at the present time we should have certain forces and means in the reserve of the General Staff so that when necessary they could be used to reinforce one front or another, and especially the front advancing to the entire depth of a theater of military operations. Such a measure would, from one standpoint, make it possible to avoid spending the money to maintain certain reconnaissance units and subunits in all the border military districts in peacetime, and from another standpoint, it would ensure rapid and efficient utilization of



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them where the necessity for this arises.

The subsequent task in increasing the reconnaissance capabilities of front formations must consist of a more rapid working out of new technical means -- complexes and systems of air and ground reconnaissance supporting the obtaining, collection, processing, and transmission of reconnaissance information within minimum time limits and the conduct of reconnaissance to the necessary depth.

Thus, the most complete carrying out of reconnaissance tasks for an offensive operation of a front to the entire depth of a theater of military operations at the present time and in the near future can be ensured, in our opinion, by organizing reconnaissance appropriately, and, above all, by centralizing it in the theater of military operations, and then by bringing into service new technical means of reconnaissance which meet the correspondingly increased requirements, allowing the front to conduct it to the necessary depth, and to obtain and process the information received in the shortest possible time.

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